

Poems by
Charles Kingsley

A Lecture

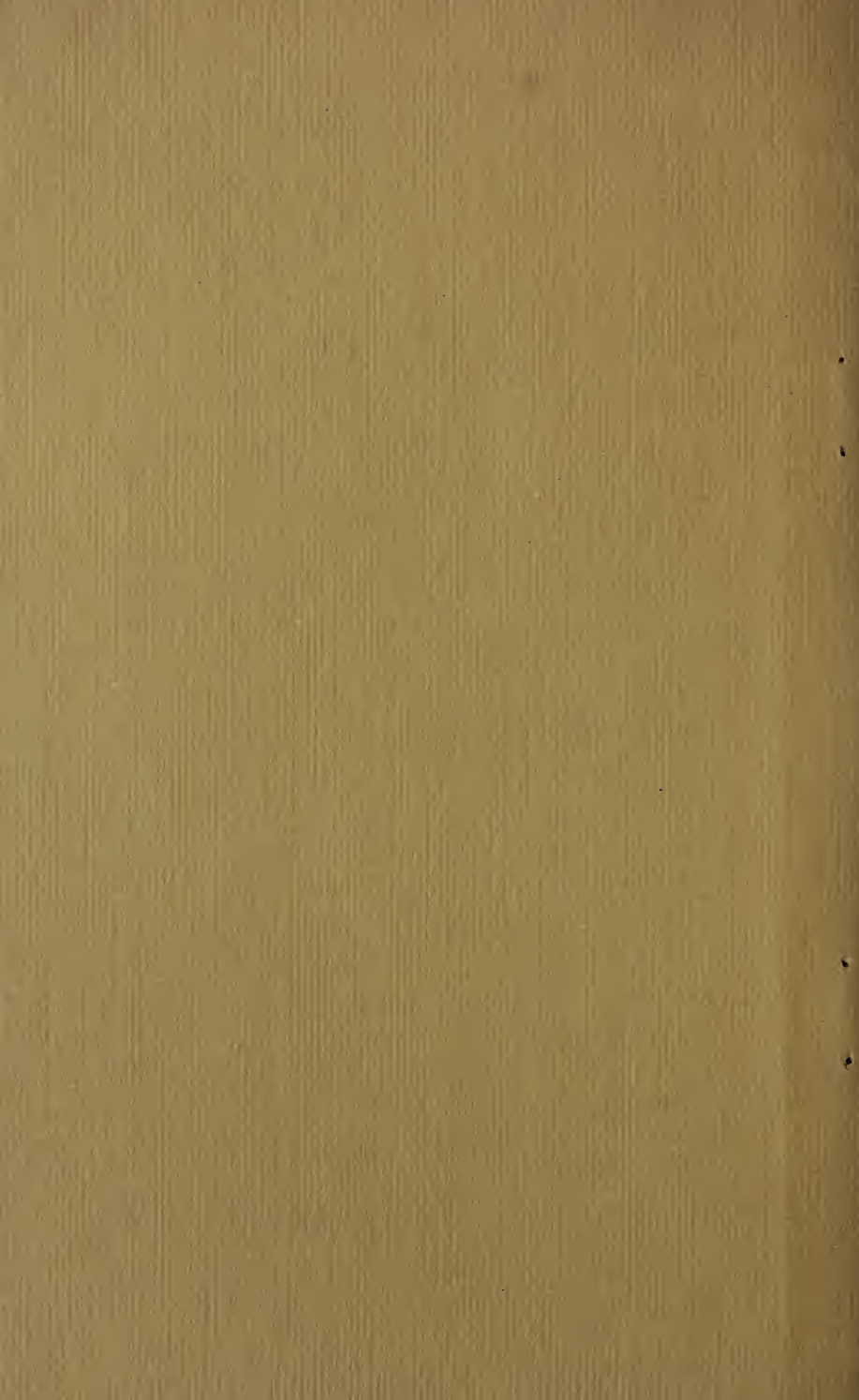
DELIVERED BEFORE THE CHESTER SOCIETY OF
NATURAL SCIENCE, LITERATURE, AND ART,
ON MARCH 4th, 1915,

BY

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CANON OF CHESTER CATHEDRAL.

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This paper has been written from notes of a Lecture delivered before the Chester Society of Natural Science, Literature, and Art, on March 4th, 1915. It is printed by the generosity of Charles Kingsley's friend, Mr. Thomas Shepherd, who has kindly allowed me to make it rather longer than the actual lecture. I have in two or three places profited by the very interesting speeches which were made by the Lord Bishop of Chester and other Members of the Society to modify or complete what I said. May I respectfully and affectionately thank all who were present for the more than kind welcome they gave me on this my first entry into the life of Chester outside the Cathedral.

A. NAIRNE.

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Poems by Charles Kingsley

THIS is the title of a small book, first published (by the Author's friend, Mr. Macmillan) in 1871; a small book and all pure gold. Kingsley once wrote in answer to a friend's letter, "You are not wise in rating my work high. I feel in myself a deficiency of discursive fancy. I can put into singing words the plain things I see and feel, but the power of metaphor and analogue, the instructive vision of connections between all things in heaven and earth, is very weak in me. But I believe you are quite right in saying that my poetry is all of me which will last. Except perhaps my 'Hypatia.'" He agrees with his friend's judgment, modestly but we may be sure sincerely. And he had true insight. Good as the other novels are they begin to lose their vogue; yet "Hypatia" stands apart and will surely live. And the poems are already becoming classical; in their own kind they are not surpassed.

In their own kind; it is remarkable that in this letter Kingsley shews also a certain blindness about his own genius. The simplicity and directness of these poems are their excellence. More of the "metaphor and analogue" would spoil them. The lyrics are things by themselves. No one has written poetry like them. "The Saint's Tragedy" and "Saint Maura" are highly characteristic of the author's mind, but they do not quite reveal his essential poetic self. If anyone were making acquaintance with Kingsley's poems for the first time he should begin with the lyrics, and read on and on, simply for enjoyment, not stopping to ask questions, though he will be sure to pause more and more frequently as he goes on to let the enjoyment sink into his soul. He should read as the poet seems to have sung. Many a man, even though divergent prejudices prevent his being in full sympathy with Kingsley, takes up the poems of an evening and reads half through the night, forgetting prejudice and self and the passing hours, carried away by their strange, strong, unaffected beauty.

But questions will presently arise, and our enjoyment will be deepened by considering them—where, when, and why were these poems written? The book of poems itself answers these questions in part, for the year and place is noted at the end of each piece. To one who has read "Charles Kingsley, his letters and memories of his life, edited by his wife" (2 vols., King, 1876), these notes are

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full of significance. They call up a wealth of associations round the poems. The poems become a kind of fragmentary diary, in which Kingsley has recorded great moments in his life, and the record is most intimate and sincere. Think of the lines "On the death of a certain Journal," which begin,

So die, thou child of stormy dawn,

and end

Failure? While tide-floods rise and boil
Round cape and isle, in port and cove,
Resistless, star-led from above:
What though our tiny wave recoil?

The Journal was the "Christian Socialist," and the poem marks the end of a stirring chapter in Kingsley's career, wherein he was associated with F. D. Maurice, Hughes, and others, who tried to guide instead of stemming the tide of the Chartist riots. The whole story is told in the "Life and letters," and the poem gains when it is placed in this proper setting.

It will be worth while to begin our study by sketching Kingsley's life. He was born on June 12th, 1819, at Holne Vicarage, Devon. His father was afterwards appointed to the parish of Barnack, in the Cambridge Fens; then to Clovelly; then to Chelsea. Charles often visited Clovelly in later life, and wrote poems about it. He has celebrated the Fens in one of his best "Prose Idylls," and perhaps reminiscences of them colour some of the poems, but he probably learned the Fen country from Cambridge, where he went (to Magdalene College) in 1838. In 1842 he was ordained and went as Curate to Eversley. A year or two later he was married and settled at Eversley as Rector; Eversley was his home for the rest of his life. In 1848 he published his dramatic poem, "The Saint's Tragedy," to which Maurice wrote an Introduction. Then comes the period of the Chartist Riots, to which belong the two "Socialist" novels, "Yeast" and "Alton Locke." In 1851 this period closed with the "Christian Socialist" and a holiday in Germany. How far the close was an end, how far a beginning of his labour for social reform has been indicated by the lines quoted above.

A new period, from 1853 to 1860, is marked by the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny. During these years he published "Hypatia," "Westward Ho!" and "Two years ago;" "Glaucus" on the natural history of the sea; "The Heroes," tales from Greek mythology; and "The Schools of Alexandria," lectures given in Edinburgh in which the materials collected for "Hypatia" were arranged in another and (I think) very attractive form. We noticed above that Kingsley put "Hypatia" on a higher level than the rest of his novels, and that time will endorse

his judgment. It is indeed a great book, with solid learning behind it. But Kingsley, being a poet, was more creative than critical. The narrative in "Hypatia" is never dulled by the erudition. It is an epical romance, all fused together in a passion of earnestness. This must be remembered when we hear it said that in 1860 a novelist was made Professor of Modern History at Cambridge. Kingsley was an impetuous fighter, but very modest. He never pretended to be a scholar, but it is a mistake to accept him at his own estimate. With him, as with his friend and master Maurice, we are apt to forget how much they read, because they both used reading as a means and not as an end in itself. Neither of them was an academic person. Cambridge accepted them both as Professors, with much advantage to herself and to the world. At any rate, the Cambridge Professorship in 1860, marks the beginning of another period which includes the publication of "Water Babies"—an extraordinary book which might almost be credited with as tough a life as "Hypatia" and the Poems—a holiday in France and another in the West Indies. These holidays are mentioned because they appear in the poems, and for another reason; they are symptoms of the strain upon Kingsley's health which his eager life entailed. There were but four of them, and the last two were badly needed. Besides his preaching, teaching, and visiting at Eversley (all of which he did with tenfold energy), his consuming zeal for public righteousness, his lectures, and his controversies, it must be remembered that he never had much money, and that he wrote his books in order to educate his children. The freedom and glory of his poems is due in part to their not belonging to that necessary toil. The poems were holidays themselves. And yet the necessary toil went to the making of them; art always seems to thrive best when her purse is light.

This Cambridge period ends with the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. These wars all stirred him to the heart. With his tense nerves he felt the horror of war more than most men, yet the gallant strain in him would not allow him to think of war as simply evil. And he had a re-assurance in that sense of God revealed in nature which is expressed in all his poetry. Let us interrupt this dry chronicle with the verses entitled "September 21, 1870."

Speak low, speak little: who may sing
 While yonder cannon-thunders boom?
 Watch, shuddering, what each day may bring:
 Nor ' pipe amid the crack of doom.'

And yet—the pines sing overhead,
 The robins by the alder-pool,
 The bees about the garden-bed,
 The children dancing home from school.

And ever at the loom of Birth

The mighty Mother weaves and sings :
 She weaves—fresh robes for mangled earth ;
 She sings—fresh hopes for desperate things.

And thou too : if through Nature's calm
 Some strain of music touch thine ears,
 Accept and share that soothing balm,
 And sing, though choked with pitying tears.

This brings us to the year of his appointment to the Canonry at Chester. When we consider how short a time he was at Chester, it is remarkable that he should have made the very deep impression he did, an impression which seems to grow only deeper as the years run by. Of course he was one who would make an impression wherever he went, and at once. He was so affectionate as well as forceful. But that is not the whole explanation. He had an especial affection for Chester, and his three years here were his happy evening hour. We may be sure that he was quite sincere when he said that he would not have left Chester for Westminster if it had not been for the reason already mentioned, but which in his failing health had become more pressing—his children had to be provided for ; he could no longer work double-tides ; and Westminster seemed to promise an end to anxiety and freedom to devote himself wholly to what he had always believed his proper work. The promise however was not fulfilled in the way expected. Illness obliged him to begin this new piece of life by a voyage to America. He returned and he preached in Westminster Abbey. But he had hardly time for more than that. He died at Eversley on January 23rd, 1875, aged 55 years.

The voyage to America was the last of the four holidays. Like the others it is entered in the poem-diary. The entry is a " Ballad " with a strange refrain. It begins " Are you ready for your steeple-chase, Lorraine, Lorraine, Lorraine?" It tells how the woman refused to ride the horse with its ominous name " Vindictive : "

I cannot ride Vindictive, as any man might see,
 And I will not ride Vindictive, with this baby on my
 knee ;
 He's killed a boy, he's killed a man, and why must
 he kill me ?

But her husband compels her, by a very dastardly threat,
 and

She mastered young Vindictive—Oh ! the gallant lass
 was she,
 And kept him straight and won the race as near as
 near could be ;

But he killed her at the brook against a pollard willow tree,
 Oh! he killed her at the brook, the brute, for all the world to see,
 And no one but the baby cried for poor Lorraine,
 Lorrèe.

Thus the poems end with pity. This note of pity sounds all through from "The Saint's Tragedy" onwards; pity for the poor, the oppressed, the weary toilers, for those who do as well as for those who suffer evil, for the generations that are enslaved for lack of truth, and for the tragic suffering of women. Sometimes the pity breaks into fierce indignation, as in "The Bad Squire."

The merry brown hares came leaping
 Over the crest of the hill,
 Where the clover and corn lay sleeping
 Under the moonlight still.

So the story begins, with the quietude of nature. But the merry hares are spoiling the crops, men's food, and a poacher's widow is watching that and something worse, the spot of ground where her husband had been killed in a fray with the keepers. He had broken the law no doubt, but she sets out in bitter language her side of the case.

You have sold the labouring-man, squire,
 Body and soul to shame,
 To pay for your seat in the House, squire,
 And to pay for the feed of your game.
 You made him a poacher yourself, squire,
 When you'd give neither work nor meat,

When packed in one reeking chamber,
 Man, maid, mother and little ones lay,

Our daughters with base-born babies
 Have wandered away in their shame,
 If your misses had slept, squire, where they did,
 Your misses might do the same.

—you've run up a debt that will never
 Be paid us by penny-club rules.

In the season of shame and sadness,
 In the dark and dreary day,
 When scrofula, gout, and madness
 Are eating your race away;

When your youngest, the mealy-mouthed rector,
 Lets your soul rot asleep to the grave,
 You will find in your God the protector
 Of the freeman you fancied your slave.

With that prophecy the woman's "passion was over," and she "went wandering into the night." But the play of nature continues :

But the merry brown hares came leaping
Over the uplands still,
Where the clover and corn lay sleeping
On the side of the white chalk hill.

Was—is the indictment true? It seemed true, and not without reason, to the woman. The words are her's, not the author's. He put them into her mouth dramatically. Yet he did so with deliberate purpose. Such evil did exist, perhaps still does ; and if it has been mitigated since the poem was written, that is largely due to Kingsley's courage in not being "mealy-mouthed." Poems as well as novels may sometimes be written with a purpose.

Still the poet ought to manage his purpose in a different way from the orator. This is a fine utterance of Kingsley, the "Christian Socialist ;" it has many of the characteristics of Kingsley the poet ; but it is not one of his perfect poems. The moral aim stands apart from the poetry ; it does not share and contribute to the beauty of the whole. All art ought to be moral, but it also must be beautiful and beautiful as a whole. If it is not, the moral effect itself suffers. How much more effective morally are Shelley's "Lines in the Euganean Hills" than his earlier poems. The same advance will be recognised if we pass from "The Bad Squire" to "The Day of the Lord."

The Day of the Lord is at hand, at hand :
Its storms roll up the sky ;
The nations sleep starving on heaps of gold ;
All dreamers toss and sigh ;
The night is darkest before the morn ;
When the pain is sorest the child is born,
And the Day of the Lord at hand.

Gather you, gather you, angels of God—
Freedom, and Mercy, and Truth ;
Come ! for the Earth is grown coward and old,
Come down, and renew us her youth.
Wisdom, Self-Sacrifice, Daring, and Love,
Haste to the battle-field, stoop from above,
To the Day of the Lord at hand.

Gather you, gather you, hounds of hell—
Famine, and Plague, and War ;
Idleness, Bigotry, Cant, and Misrule,
Gather, and fall in the snare !
Hireling and Mammonite, Bigot and Knave,
Crawl to the battle-field, sneak to your grave,
In the Day of the Lord at hand.

The poem is rounded off with another verse, but these three are enough to shew its quality. The outlook is vast, and has none of the particularity of "The Bad Squire." That made the poetic task in one way easier, but it was the right setting for the idea. Here all is transmuted into poetry. Sound and sense are indistinguishable. The whole of life illuminates the dark paths. The storm is not simply cruel; it is grand. The temper of the poet is raised to a higher passion, in which there is no room for anything ephemeral.

Both these poems belong to Kingsley's "Socialist" period. That was the beginning of his public life. From that time forward he was often before the eyes of men; recognised as one of the leaders of a public cause; applauded and denounced. Then and afterwards he considered Maurice as his master. "I think this will explain a good deal of Maurice," he wrote when he was publishing "Yeast." But he was never so much in public view as Maurice and the other leaders of the cause. His home was Eversley; he was a country clergyman who came forward from time to time to do or say some particular thing. Eversley was always first with him. He once wrote in a letter, "It is a comfort often to feel there is one little spot, the parish, to which thoughts and prayers are for ever turning." Even George Herbert has never said anything more excellently of parish life, and the words are characteristic of Kingsley in that they touch the feelings of ordinary men; therein lay one of the secrets of his power. But they were especially true of himself. Two "comforts" were a continual refreshment to him in his complex life of restless activity—Eversley and poetry. And the two were really one. In a country parish a man lives very close to nature, and to a poet like Kingsley the magic of the country is not in the scenery by itself; men and beasts and trees and skies are curiously united in that intimate out-door life. He hints this in some lines to Miss Mitford, the writer of "Our Village:"

The single eye, the daughter of the light;
Well pleased to recognise in lowliest shade
Some glimmer of its parent beam, and made
By daily draughts of brightness, inly bright

All these are yours. The same examples lure
You in each woodland, me on breezy moor—
With kindred aim the same sweet path along,
To knit in loving knowledge rich and poor.

It is only a hint. The verses are a little restrained and old-fashioned, as though in respectful sympathy with the

lady to whom they are addressed. But indeed the mystery itself is not one to be too explicitly revealed. The revelation comes to the reader of the poems when he finds them full of Eversley throughout. Sometimes it is a vague recollection or imitation, as in the hamlet in "The Saint's Tragedy" (I., ii.), with its blue slopes, and orchard boughs, and "those young rogues marching to school;" or in the "Installation Ode," where Eversley is reflected in the villages of the Cam,

Humming mills and golden meadows,
Barred with elm and poplar shadows.

Sometimes we have a clear-cut picture of Eversley pure and simple ;

O blessed drums of Aldershot !
O blessed South-west train !
O blessed, blessed Speaker's clock,
All prophesying rain !
O blessed yaffil, laughing loud !
O blessed falling glass !
O blessed fan of cold gray cloud !
O blessed smelling grass !
O bless'd South wind that toots his horn
Through every hole and crack !
I'm off at eight to-morrow morn,
To bring *such* fishes back.

And there is a "Child Ballad," which I cannot refrain from quoting in full. It breathes the spirit of the country parson in his school, and might be thought—if we did not remember Mrs. Alexander's "All things bright and beautiful"—the best children's hymn ever written :

Jesus, He loves one and all,
Jesus, He loves children small,
Their souls are waiting round His feet
On high, before His mercy-seat.
While he wandered here below
Children small to Him did go,
At His feet they knelt and prayed,
On their heads His hands He laid.
Came a Spirit on them then,
Better than of mighty men,
A Spirit faithful, pure and mild,
A Spirit fit for king and child.
Oh ! that Spirit give to me,
Jesu Lord, where'er I be !

Eversley, with its moors and streams, brings us to the ruling passion of Kingsley's whole life, his love of nature. It is sometimes said in praise of a poet that he writes of

nature with delight and with insight, but never forgets that man is more than nature ; he uses nature to interpret man. This is partly true of most of our earlier poets. It is true of Shakespeare—yet Shakespeare wrote “ A Midsummer Night’s Dream.” It is less true of Milton ; “ L’Allegro ” and “ Il Penseroso ” already shew that more immediate sympathy with nature which grows so deep and mysterious in Shelley, or Mr. Hardy’s novels, and in some of the best of our quite modern poets. With them nature is no longer the scene, so to speak, of the drama of man’s life ; man and nature are interfused in one universal life. That might be said of Kingsley, but it would not be the whole truth. He is both simpler and more in downright earnest. His love of nature is informed with real knowledge ; hence the downright earnestness. When he acquiesced in his friend’s judgment about what part of his work would live, they were both no doubt thinking of his literary work. Nor would Kingsley have claimed to be a man of science in the sense that his friend Huxley was. How nearly he approached such men is a question to be answered by those who have themselves enjoyed an education in science. It is indisputable that his knowledge has given a great impulse to scientific study in Chester, and that could hardly have been possible unless there had been something solid behind his enthusiasm. His science was perhaps like his history. In each he was a brilliant amateur. But in each he is apt to be judged unjustly, because his conspicuously creative faculty makes it hard to believe that he excelled in the more plodding virtue of erudition. At any rate this is certain. His love of nature was rendered earnest, even severe, by his unusually scientific knowledge.

But it was also more simple than the modern poets’. More simple ; not less profound. The distinction might be thus expressed. Kingsley, like Isaiah, takes God for granted. The modern poet sees man and nature as interacting parts in a movement which is inexplicably divine. Kingsley sees them as a sacrament of the divine ; and though he too is unable to explain the divine, yet he is satisfied to sum up all hope and doubt and mystery in the name, God. Readers of Aeschylus will remember a chorus in the “ Agamemnon ” where that most theological dramatist professes a kindred faith ; and it might be said that Aeschylus was to Euripides in this respect what Kingsley is to these more modern poets. In “ Drifting Away ” he has himself laid bare the working of this ultimate faith.

They drift away. Ah, God ! they drift for ever.
 I watch the stream sweep onward to the sea,
 Like some old battered buoy upon a roaring river,
 Round whom the tide-waifs hang—then drift to sea.

I watch them drift—the old familiar faces,
 Who fished and rode with me, by stream and wold,
 Till ghosts, not men, fill old beloved places,
 And, ah! the land is rank with churchyard mold.

I watch them drift—the youthful aspirations,
 Shores, landmarks, beacons, drift alike.

I watch them drift—the poets and the statesmen ;
 The very streams run upward from the sea.

Yet overhead the boundless arch of heaven
 Still fades to night, still blazes into day.

Ah, God! My God! Thou wilt not drift away.

In the phrase “ a sacrament of the divine,” the word sacrament is used in its large, ancient sense, which covers not only ceremonial, instituted sacraments, but all the visible life of the world as it reveals and is a means of reaching the eternal. Thus Kingsley speaks more than once of “ that will of God revealed in things to which I try humbly though confusedly to submit all my conclusions.” And in the first of his “ Village Sermons ”—it is on “ God’s world, the great green book which God has given to labouring men ”—he says, “ ‘ As a garment shalt Thou change them,’—ay, there was David’s secret! He saw that this earth and skies are God’s garment—the garment by which we see God.” That is a great idea which is helped by the scientific temper, and accordingly he says that the keynote of all he had taught in addresses at Sion College to the Clergy, at Woolwich to the Military Cadets, and at Chester, was this: “ Science is on the march. Listen to her divine words, for what is she but the voice of God, *Deus revelatus*? Mark her footsteps ; and if you cannot keep pace with her, still follow her.”

The scientific temper helps the sacramental idea, because it forbids mere fancifulness. The unscientific poet is apt to sink to allegory, in which things are made arbitrary signs of quite other things thought of. The scientific poet sticks to realities, that is sacraments, and only cares for the real witness of one part of life for another ; yet ultimately of visible for eternal life, and so Kingsley says in another letter (quoting S. Augustine), “ My doctrine has been for years, if I may speak of myself, that *omnia exeunt in mysterium*, that below all natural phenomena we come to a transcendental—in plain English a miraculous ground.”

When we say “ Pansies for thoughts ” it is a pretty fancy ; when S. Paul uses the symbol of the seed for the body growing through the mortal to the immortal he is speaking sacramentally. There is one poem of Kingsley’s,

and perhaps only one, where he indulges in mere fancy. It is called "The Tide Rock." It is so short that it may be quoted in full, and it is pretty enough to be worth quoting.

How sleeps yon rock, whose half day's bath is done.
 With broad bright side beneath the broad bright sun,
 Like sea-nymph tired, on cushioned mosses sleeping.
 Yet, nearer drawn, beneath her purple tresses
 From drooping brows we find her slowly weeping.
 So many a wife for cruel man's caresses
 Must inly pine and pine, yet outward bear
 A gallant front to this world's gaudy glare.

The observation here is exact and the thought is as graceful as the language. But it is a mere illustration. There is no real connexion between the rock, which after all has no sad feeling, and the pathetic courage of the woman. Of course that kind of thing is often admirable in poetry; an illustration, simile, analogy, makes a thought vivid. The poets whom Kingsley said he could not rival fill their verse with splendour by such means. But it is the peculiar excellence of Kingsley that his genius felt strange among those ornaments. His method may be seen, strongly marked, in "The Poetry of a Root Crop."

Underneath their eider-robe
 Russet swede and golden globe,
 Feathered carrot, burrowing deep,
 Steadfast wait in charmed sleep ;
 Treasure houses wherein lie,
 Locked by angels' alchemy.
 Milk and hair, and blood, and bone,
 Children of the barren stone ;
 Children of the flaming Air,
 With his blue eye keen and bare,
 Spirit-peopled smiling down
 On frozen field and toiling town—
 Toiling town that will not heed
 God His voice for rage and greed ;
 Frozen fields that surpliced lie,
 Gazing patient at the sky ;
 Like some marble carven nun,
 With folded hands when work is done,
 Who mute upon her tomb doth pray,
 Till the resurrection day.

This is not to be understood quite easily at first. It is so close to nature herself that its meaning is never exhausted ; it means more and more every time it is read. It penetrates deeper and deeper into our life through many stages ; the vegetable life, the life-bearing earth and air, the angels who, as in the Psalms, are living powers of

nature, the life of man, his deeds and thoughts and conscience toward God ; and then the *natural* transition to eternal life through what would be a mere illustration if it stood by itself, but in this context it becomes a recognition of the sacramental character of religious art—a tombstone really means something true.

Other instances from these poems might be gathered in multitudes. One more shall be quoted for its delightfulness, and because a passage from one of Kingsley's letters to his wife shews how his poetry was born from real things, and how intensely it was always felt.

I cannot tell what you say, green leaves,
I cannot tell what you say :
But I know that there is a spirit in you,
And a word in you this day.

I cannot tell what you say, rosy rocks,
I cannot tell what you say :
But I know that there is a spirit in you,
And a word in you this day.

I cannot tell what you say, brown streams,
I cannot tell what you say :
But I know that in you too a spirit doth live,
And a word doth speak this day.

(The Word's answer).

' Oh green is the colour of faith and truth,
And rose the colour of love and youth,
And brown of the fruitful clay.
Sweet Earth is faithful, and fruitful, and young,
And her bridal day shall come ere long,
And you shall know what the rocks and the streams
And the whispering woodlands say.'

Here is the letter :—

“ Starting out to fish down to Drew's Teignton—the old Druids' sacred place, to see Logan stones and Cromlechs. Yesterday was the most charming *solitary* day I ever spent in my life—scenery more lovely than tongue can tell. It brought out of me the following bit of poetry, with many happy tears.”

Kingsley was a great fisherman. His letters are full of fishing, and though he did not often shoot, he was able to hunt and enjoyed it lustily. Perhaps this is strange in one who loved birds and beasts so well, and who had such a pitiful heart. The difficulty will not strike some people. But there are others to whom sport is a puzzle. Sport is not quite explained by the plea that most of us eat animals, for sport involves pleasure in killing ; it is hardly possible

to deny that it causes at least some unnecessary pain, and it was a good sportsman and a tender-hearted man who said "Yes, sport is cruel." Yet he had no idea of giving it up. And perhaps he acted on a true impulse. At any rate it may be commonly observed that good sportsmen are often careful to avoid and check a great deal of cruelty to animals which the more sentimental lovers of animals condone, and it is the sportsmen, keepers, and poachers, with whom animals appear so often to have an instinctive sympathy. Such considerations do not solve the problem, but this is not the place to pursue it. There is no hint in anything Kingsley wrote that he felt so much as the existence of the problem. He enjoyed sport with a perfectly clear conscience. But some hint of what might possibly have been his explanation may be gathered from his poetry. Consider the hares at the beginning and end of "The Bad Squire." The poem is an outcry of terrible human passion. But the hares know nothing of this. They are actually bound up with it as cause and effect. The poacher and his widow and the hares live very close together, the hares almost touching civilisation as preserved game, and the others almost outlaws and nearer to the life of fields and woods than to the squire. And yet the hares and the outlaws are miles apart, and this unconsciousness of one another adds to the poignancy of the tragedy. As Cardinal Newman once said, "Man lives with a mystery on either side, the angels and the brutes." So perhaps Kingsley would have considered that sport was right because we cannot credit animals with man's mental feelings, and the moral principles by which man's conduct towards men is regulated do not apply to his conduct towards animals. He might have said something like that, though it does not really remove the difficulty. However, the bearing of all this on our present study of his poems is that it points us to a line of thought which often appears in them, the way in which man, though himself a part of nature, yet dwells as a stranger among his natural surroundings—"I cannot tell what you say, brown streams." This is shadowed forth in the myth of the "sea-maids" in "Andromeda." Andromeda, the Phœnician princess was chained to a rock and left to be the prey of a sea-monster that was devastating the country. The poem describes how she is left alone with her dreadful expectation; our pity and horror are stirred within us as we read. And then in the night before the frightened eyes of the victim in her terrible home-sickness the pageant of the sea-maids passes in its beauty, which is not the beauty of human beings:

Onward they passed in their joy; on their brows
 neither sorrow nor anger;
 Self-sufficing, as gods, never heeding the woe of the
 maiden.

She would have shrieked for their mercy : but shame
 made her dumb ; and their eyeballs
 Stared on her careless and still, like the eyes in the
 house of the idols.
 Seeing they saw not, and passed, like a dream, on the
 murmuring ripple.

One life, but two aspects of union and disunion ; a
 music of nature and humanity which owes much of its
 interest to a discord ; and yet the metaphor is faulty, for
 this discord never resolves itself. Here is a paradox which
 goes far beyond the narrow question of sport. It is what
 S. Paul recognised : " For the creation was subjected to
 vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who
 subjected it, in hope ; because the creation itself also shall
 be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty
 of the glory of the children of God." (Rom. viii., 20 f.
 R.V. marg.)

Kingsley's sport has carried us into deep waters. Let
 us, before leaving the subject, take it in a simpler fashion,
 and notice some fine poems which his love for sport has
 produced. There is " The Find," for instance, with its
 spirited opening ;

Yon sound's neither sheep-bell nor bark,
 They're running—they're running, Go hark !

And there is " The Delectable Day : "

Ah, God ! a poor soul can but thank Thee
 For such a delectable day,

in which the poet and his other children walk to the meet
 and see " the boy " off " on the famous gray pony," and
 " wander to windward " in the afternoon,

To meet the dear boy coming back ;
 And to catch, down the turns of the valley,
 The last weary chime of the pack.

And then the evening at home—but that verse has one
 flat phrase in it which spoils the perfection of the whole.
 Let us therefore choose, to quote in full, another hunting
 piece in which Kingsley's larger aspirations mingle with the
 glamour of the field :

Forward ! Hark forward's the cry !
 One more fence and we're out on the open,
 So to us at once, if you want to live near us !
 Hark to them, ride to them, beauties ! as on they go,
 Leaping and sweeping away in the vale below !
 Cowards and bunglers, whose heart or whose eye is slow,
 Find themselves staring alone.

So the great cause flashes by ;
 Nearer and clearer its purposes open,
 While louder and prouder the world-echoes cheer us :
 Gentlemen sportsmen, you ought to live up to us,
 Lead us, and lift us, and hallo our game to us—
 We cannot call the hounds off, and no shame to us—
 Don't be left staring alone !

There is plenty of vigorous life in that. Kingsley was of course very much alive. He enjoyed life and revered it. He saw a holy mystery in all of it, and especially in its fruitfulness. Again and again he expresses that thought, sometimes with startling directness, as in "The Watchman" :

' Watchman, what of the night ?'
 ' The stars are out in the sky ;
 And the merry round moon will be rising soon,
 For us to go sailing by.'

' Watchman, what of the night ?'
 ' The tide flows in from the sea ;
 There's water to float a little cockboat
 Will carry such fishers as we.'

' Watchman, what of the night ?'
 ' The night is a fruitful time ;
 When to many a pair are born children fair,
 To be christened at morning chime.'

This again is a poem of which the meaning does not lie on the surface, and is not exhausted by a first interpretation. But it certainly joins the idea of fruitfulness with the idea of renewal. Life renewing life is at the heart of all the ancient doctrines of sacrifice. It is ever inspiring Kingsley. It is the source of that perpetual revival of his hope in darkest hours, which appears in "A Christmas Carol," "The Dead Church," "Old and New," and best of all in "The Tide River" from "The Water-Babies:"

Clear and cool, clear and cool,
 By laughing shallow, and dreaming pool ;
 Cool and clear, cool and clear,
 By shining shingle, and foaming wear ;
 Under the crag where the ouzel sings,
 And the ivied wall where the church-bell rings,
 Undeiled, for the undeiled ;
 Play by me, bathe in me, mother and child.

Dank and foul, dank and foul,
 By the smoky town in its murky cowl ;
 Foul and dank, foul and dank,
 By wharf and sewer and slimy bank ;

Darker and darker the further I go,
 Baser and baser the richer I grow ;
 Who dare sport with the sin-defiled ?
 Shrink from me, turn from me, mother and child.

Strong and free, strong and free,
 The floodgates are open, away to the sea.
 Free and strong, free and strong,
 Cleansing my streams as I hurry along
 To the golden sands, and the leaping bar,
 And the taintless tide that awaits me afar,
 As I lose myself in the infinite main,
 Like a soul that has sinned and is pardoned again.
 Undefiled, for the undefiled ;
 Play by me, bathe in me, mother and child.

This reverence for fruitful life was the main reason for Kingsley's too prejudiced criticism of the religious life of the middle ages. He saw in the exaltation of the unmarried over the married state almost a blasphemy against God who reveals Himself in teeming nature, and has consecrated nature in the family. "The earth seems one vast bride-bed. Doth God tempt us?" says S. Elizabeth in "The Saint's Tragedy." That question and the difficulties which were cruelly arrayed against her search for a right answer to it, set the course of her tragedy. It is a good drama, and in his dramatic imagination Kingsley is fair to both sides. It is not dishonesty of which he accuses the mediæval churchmen. Far more does he feel indignant pity at their pathetic, unavoidable blindness to the holier truth. In another dramatic piece—not a play but a dramatic idyll as it might be styled—"Saint Maura," he goes back to a more primitive era of the Church, when a deacon might be married and suffer martyrdom with his young wife. It is a powerful stream of rhetoric, all the more powerful for its restraint. But it is horrible—the woman speaking from the cross where she has hung through one day and will live and hang two days more. Kingsley's unadorned style makes it too real to be borne. Better art, as it seems to me, and therefore nearer to essential truth, is a fragment of a prologue which he began to write for "Saint Maura." It stands apart from it in the collected poems with the title "Down to the Mothers."

Drop back awhile through the years, to the warm rich
 youth of the nations,
 Childlike in virtue and faith, though childlike in
 passion and pleasure,
 Childlike still, and still near to their God, while the
 day-spring of Eden
 Lingered in rose-red rays on the peaks of Ionian
 mountains.

Down to the mothers, as Faust went, I go, to the roots
of our manhood.

Mothers of us in our cradles ; of us once more in our
glory.

New-born, body and soul, in the great pure world which
shall be

In the renewing of all things, when man shall return
to his Eden ——

No doubt evil and cruelty must be looked in the face. But there are lines in " Saint Maura " which have no counterpart in the Evangelists' narrative of the Passion. Spots of cruelty are suddenly focussed. In the Prologue all that has been passed through and left behind. Kingsley's simple faith shines again, but not in bare simplicity. He has been down to the dark caves of life and returns enriched with painful, but now calmed experience.

And Kingsley is best in his simplicity ; that is his innermost self. In nature he sought the will of God humbly and confessed that it was sometimes hard to discern, but he never doubted it was there. A poem called " Palinodia," dated 1841 (which is a touching commentary on " The Tide River "), shews that in early Cambridge days his faith had suffered some eclipse. But through the rest of his life he had no divided mind in that respect. In another matter he had. When he was Professor of History at Cambridge he lectured on " The Roman and the Teuton." That title indicates how his affections were drawn in two directions. He was full of admiration for the strong new life of progress that came in with the Teutonic nations. Yet he could not but regret the majesty of Rome, and the art of Hellas which Rome inherited. The romantic or the classical? He could not give up either. Yet he was more for the romantic. That was in his very bones. That was more than a taste with him. It was part of that essential force in him which burst into spontaneous expression in his famous " Ode to the North-east Wind :"

Come ; and strong within us
Stir the Vikings' blood ;
Bracing bone and sinew ;
Blow, thou wind of God !

And it was even more than that. The name of God is not introduced at random into the lines just quoted. Kingsley might please himself with the fancy of a " youth of the world," in which

Men still faced this fair creation
With humour, heart, imagination,

but he seriously believed that the break up of the old

classical world was a "going down to the mothers," and the start of a great course which still goes on. This sentence from one of his letters will suggest what is meant better than a long explanation. "In five and twenty years my ruling idea has been what my friend Huxley has lately set forth as common to him and Comte; that the *reconstruction* of society on a scientific basis is not only possible, but the only political object much worth striving for."

Such then being the attitude of Kingsley to the old world and the new, we should expect to find him writing some poems out of an exuberant heart in the "Gothic" spirit. And so we do. The very best of them is "The Ode to the North-east Wind," but not less delightful in its own kind is that jolly ballad, "The Song of the little Baltung." On the other hand we should expect to find him dealing with classical subjects also, but in a peculiar way. He might have objected to a phrase in the last paragraph, that Rome inherited Greek art, for he writes somewhere, "The classical poets (Greek I mean—hang Latin Cockney Flunkeys)." But he writes this ungraciously, for the Latin poets treated their Greek inheritance very much as Kingsley himself did. They adapted it to another realm of thought and language. In "The Heroes" he told anew the stories of the Greek mythology for his children. In answer to a friend's criticism he wrote, "I feel what you say about not Greek and too Greek; but I had laid my account with all that before I wrote. If I tell the story myself as you wish, I *can't* give the children the Greek spirit—either morally or in manner; therefore I have adopted a sort of simple ballad tone, and tried to make my prose as metrical as possible. The archaisms are all slips in the rough copy, and shall be amended, as shall all recondite allusions; but you must remember as to modernisms, that we Cambridge men are *taught* to translate Greek by its modern equivalent even to slang."

The reference to Cambridge is interesting. For better or worse it explains a good deal in Kingsley and his writings. But the main point of this letter is that Kingsley wished to convey the Greek spirit, and thought he could best do so by modifying the Greek form. And if so, his whole temper and training would lead him also to believe that spirit means life, and life means development, and therefore the spirit itself could not be in Eversley just what it had been in Athens. To some devotees of the classics that might seem sacrilegious. To Kingsley—and his Cambridge training had something to do with his views—there would be no choice in the matter; such development was a fact to be observed and to lay account with; any other method would be artificial.

His own method was of course a delicate and perilous one. William Morris made the same venture more or less in "The Earthly Paradise." But though that book has many excellencies which Kingsley's classical writings lack, the Greek spirit lives in it but strangely. Morris has been masterful and changed it. Kingsley has treated it more like a naturalist; he has interfered as little as possible and just allowed the development to go on. If he had attempted many poems in this kind he could hardly have remained so obedient to his inspiration. But that was always his wisdom in poetry; he never sang but when he must. The classical poems are indeed but two, "Andromeda" and "Sappho." "Sappho" is unfinished; perhaps better so, for as it stands the thought and workmanship are flawless. The opening reminds one of Tennyson's "Oenone," but Kingsley's poem is more of a wild flower.

She lay among the myrtles on the cliff;
 Above her glared the noon; beneath, the sea.
 Upon the white horizon Atho's peak
 Weltered in burning haze; all airs were dead;
 The cicale slept among the tamarisk's hair;
 The birds sat dumb and drooping. Far below
 The lazy sea-weed glistened in the sun;
 The lazy sea-fowl dried their steaming wings;
 The lazy swell crept whispering up the ledge,
 And sank again. Great Pan was laid to rest;
 And Mother Earth watched by him as he slept,
 And hushed her myriad children for a while.
 She lay among the myrtles on the cliff;
 And sighed for sleep —

"Andromeda" is in hexameter metre. So is "Down to the Mothers," and another poem is in elegiacs, *i.e.*, the verses go in pairs, first a hexameter then a pentameter. The readiest way of explaining these terms is to print the two first lines of this piece with marks of scansion.

"Weāriġy | strēčhēs thē | sānd tō thē | sūrge, ānd thē |
 sūrge tō thē | clōudlānd;
 Weāriġy | ōnwārd I | rīde, || wāčhīng thē | wātēr ā | lōne."

The hexameter has six "feet;" the pentameter (measure of five) has two and a half feet repeated. Both metres come from the Greek; the hexameter is the measure of Homer, the elegiac of many short Greek poems and inscriptions. But there is a notable difference between Greek poetry and English, or indeed any of our modern European verse. We mark the rhythm by the accent or stress we lay upon certain syllables; thus *wāter*, *alōne*. The Greek marked it by the quantity of syllables, that is the time it takes to pronounce them carefully. In *water*

and *alone* quantity and accent coincide, for the *a* and *o* are both long vowels. In *butter* it is not so, for the *u* in *butter* is a short vowel. But English pronunciation is inferior to Greek in precision. We slur consonants and can make a syllable short even though it is divided by two or three consonants from the next. Thus we give very little time to the first syllable of *construction*, and in the lines quoted above we find no difficulty in pronouncing the second syllable of *stretches* quickly though the next word begins with another consonant. But the Greek sounded every consonant distinctly, and to him *strêrchês thê* would contain a "false quantity." Perhaps the Greek was not so particular in ordinary conversation, and we pronounce more carefully than usual when we read poetry or make a speech. Perhaps this occasional carefulness of ours may justify Mr. Robert Bridges in the English hexameters he writes, in which he does attempt to go entirely by quantity and ignores accent. It is part and parcel with the reform he wishes to make in our modern English pronunciation, which is indeed becoming more and more slipshod. His hexameters are most interesting, and in some other classical metres he and his followers have produced a good deal of liquid verse. But I doubt if he has really achieved what he intended. His quantities seem to be in some cases fixed arbitrarily; they do not represent the time we take to pronounce the syllables if we speak naturally. And he is perhaps experimenting with dead matter. In English speech, the best and most careful, there is no fixed quantity for separate syllables. The same syllable of the same word may be long in one place, short in another. Our speeches and our poems move in sweeps of rhythm. The ancient delicate "pattern-music" of the Greeks is a lovely thing that we can no more reproduce than we can that exquisite lucidity of syntax which they attained by means of their elaborate system of case-endings, participle-forms, &c. He who would rightly convey the spirit of Greek metre must regretfully allow that one kind of beauty has run its course and finished, and that the true life goes on with loss and gain, that is by natural development. Then he will gladly find that there are capabilities in the free movement of modern speech of which the Greeks had never felt the need, and that obedience to the peculiar demands of English is wise, even in the academic cult of the hexameter.

On that principle Kingsley has composed his hexameters. Whether it is loyal to the genius of language to write English hexameters at all is a question which cannot be discussed here. To me, if I may confess my own taste, English hexameters give a great deal of pleasure, whether they be purely accentual, as in Clough's "Bothie of Tober-

na-vuolich," or purely quantitative, like Mr. Robert Bridges', or partly accental partly quantitative like Kingsley's. And this last kind seems to me the best.

When we say that Greek poetry was ruled by quantity whereas English is by accent, we are but roughly right. We know so little of the really ancient Greek pronunciation that we cannot speak confidently of the manner in which the accent of their words interplayed with the quantitative rythm of their verse. But we may be sure there was such interplay ; there is much pathos in a certain passage in Aeschylus where the speaker's weary sorrow is expressed in a series of unaccented syllables and rises suddenly to indignation with the accent at the end. When the Romans took over the Greek metres we can appreciate this interplay thoroughly, for the Latin accent is nearly the same as our own, and the rules with which they stiffened their borrowed metres are almost entirely due to the need of adapting them to their own pronunciation. Hence at last the hexameter of Vergil, whom Tennyson calls the "wielder of the stately measure ever moulded by the lips of man." As the Romans did, so does Kingsley. He takes the hexameter from Greece and Rome and adapts it once more to the requirements of a new language. That language is one which insists on accent having the first place, and Kingsley frankly gives it the first place. But in all smooth-running English poetry quantity does count also. Look at Milton and Tennyson and you will see how largely it counts. So in his hexameters Kingsley makes accent coincide with quantity as often as he conveniently can. His letters shew how carefully he had thought about this ; he had made a system of English quantity for himself almost as thorough as Mr. Bridges has made. Almost ; not quite. Kingsley's masters were the Greeks not the Romans. The characteristic of the Greek hexameter is its freedom. That freedom was what Kingsley allowed to develop on the larger lines which English speech indicated. He binds himself by no hard and fast rules of quantity which may not be broken when some other natural rule requires it. His verse moves in sweeps of rythm and sometimes overflows the traditional barriers of "feet." He allows "compensation ;" one "foot" may go quicker than it is supposed to go if another makes up for this by going more slowly. And he is apt to let the metre change from true hexameter to anapaests, that is to say, instead of the "long" syllable leading the way, the two short syllables get the lead. Thus this line in "Andromeda" should be scanned according to classical models thus—

Nōw lēt thē | wōrk ōf thē | smīth trȳ | strēngth with
thē | ārms ōf Im | mōrtāls

but the run of the English words makes us rather hear it thus—

Now || lēt thĕ wōrk | ōf thĕ smīth | trȳ strĕngth | with
thĕ ārms | ōf Īmmōrt | als

and so continually.

But this, I fear, grows tedious. Let me end with a few remarks on Kingsley's poetic craftsmanship in general. The impression left by a first swift reading of his poems is that their form is quite unstudied ; the words seem to have fallen into their places of themselves. And a second, more observant reading seems to confirm this impression. There is a freedom, almost a roughness, in his use of extra syllables, and it does look like carelessness when we find two pieces entitled "Sonnet," one of which has only thirteen, the other seventeen lines. But further study alters the impression. Whether Kingsley was essaying a bold (not wholly unparalleled) innovation, or whether he was actually ignorant of, or (more likely) careless about the technical meaning of the word "sonnet," the workmanship of both pieces is excellent. Nor are the extra syllables let in at random, but in every case serve to adjust the sound to the sense and effect something that was desired. Dr. Bridge has pointed out that many of the poems would go well to music ; their progression follows what he calls the musical curve. That might come by instinct, but instinct of that kind is generally the final result of long and patient apprenticeship to an art. And nearly all analogy goes to prove that the apparent ease of a writer has been gained by much taking of pains. So it was with Newman, so with Shelley. The account Kingsley gives in two letters, already mentioned, of the elaborate preparation he made for his experiments in classical metre points in the same direction. And the more minutely the poems are examined the more frequent is the discovery of niceties which could only come from practice, and could hardly be achieved without patient correction of first drafts. Here is one example out of many. Lines may be found which do not at first sight scan easily. But when we read the poems in which they occur as poems are meant to be read, that is aloud, we find that, forgetting scansion, and putting the emphasis where it naturally falls, we get not merely a proper line but a very good one. There is one such line in the "Hunting Song" already quoted :

We cannot call the hounds off, and no shame to us.

To the eye, and without the context, this appears awkward. Read it aloud where it stands in the poem ; a slight emphasis falls naturally on the *we*, and the whole line runs off trippingly.

However it might well be that Kingsley did not make many corrections in a poem once it was written. He was just the out-of-door person who would turn his words over and over in his mind as he walked or fished, till at last he would be able to write them out without blotting one. And there is a bit of evidence for his being able to create, and apparently complete, on the impulse of the moment. "The Heroes" had been dedicated to his three elder children. One morning Mrs. Kingsley said, "Rose, Maurice, and Mary have their book and baby must have his." He went at once into his study, locked the door, and in half an hour returned with the first chapter of "The Water Babies." An impulse given no doubt meant more to his eager soul than it does to most men. And whatever may be the secret of their composition and completion there is not a single poem in the collection but bears plainly the sign of special impulse, of inspiration. In an Easter song he wrote for Eversley he has these lines,

Use the craft by God implanted ;
Use the reason not your own.

That reason not his own was the important thing in his poetry. That is why he did not write more, and that is why all he did write is poetry, not mere literature. As someone said of Beethoven, so it might be said of Kingsley the poet : "Doesn't he make you attend?"

Let us end by reading two poems, each of which illustrates almost everything we have been noticing in him ; his interfusing human life with nature, his pity, his music, his natural, inevitable utterance.

AIRLY BEACON.

Airly Beacon, Airly Beacon ;
Oh the pleasant sight to see
Shires and towns from Airly Beacon,
While my love climbed up to me !

Airly Beacon, Airly Beacon ;
Oh the happy hours we lay
Deep in fern on Airly Beacon,
Courting through the summer's day !

Airly Beacon, Airly Beacon ;
Oh the weary haunt for me,
All alone on Airly Beacon,
With his baby on my knee !

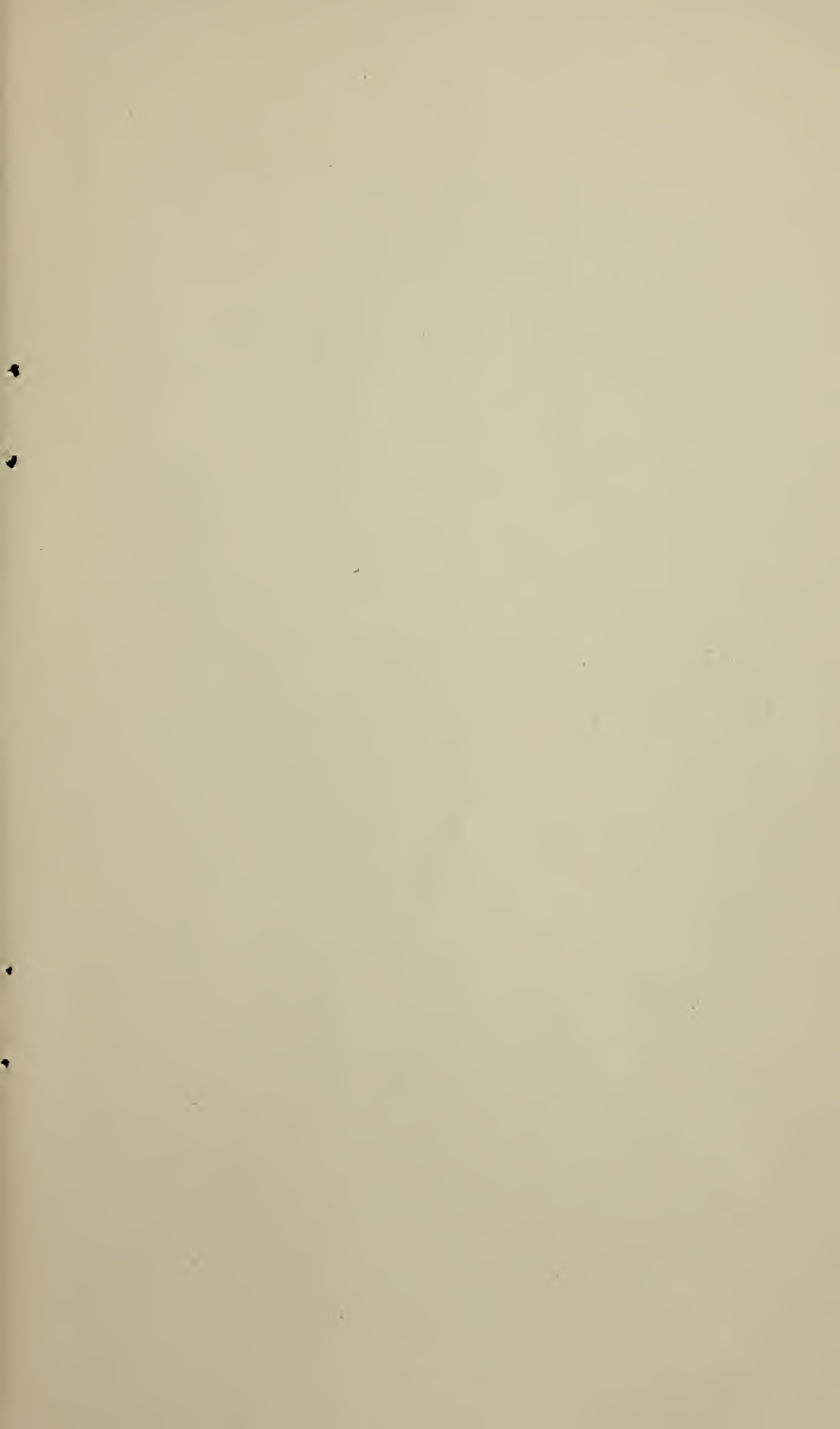
THE SANDS OF DEE.

' O Mary, go and call the cattle home,
 And call the cattle home,
 And call the cattle home
 Across the sands of Dee ;'
 The western wind was wild and dank with foam,
 And all alone went she.

 The western tide crept up along the sand,
 And o'er and o'er the sand,
 And round and round the sand,
 As far as eye could see.
 The rolling mist came down and hid the land :
 And never home came she.

 ' Oh ! is it weed, or fish, or floating hair—
 A tress of golden hair,
 A drownèd maiden's hair
 Above the nets at sea ?
 Was never salmon yet that shone so fair
 Among the stakes on Dee.'

 They rowed her in across the rolling foam,
 The cruel crawling foam,
 The cruel hungry foam,
 To her grave beside the sea ;
 But still the boatmen hear her call the cattle home
 Across the sands of Dee.







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